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The Cecilian Music Society in Ústí nad Orlicí,  
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In the year 1903, the oldest existing Bohemian music society, the Tonkünstler-Wittwen-und-Waisen-Societät, founded in Prague in March 1803, finally ceased all its music activities; it continued its work just as a pension fund up to its final closing down in 1930<sup>1</sup>. The Cecilská hudební jednota (Cecilian Music Society), founded in November 1803 in Ústí nad Orlicí/Wildenschwert, East Bohemia, was at that time still thriving. The ways in which the period social, political and cultural circumstances reflected in its work, are of special interest for anybody researching Bohemian music history<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>For the history of Prague's Society of Musicians cf. *Satzungen der zu ihrer eigenen, dann ihrer Wittwen und Waisen Versorgung vereinigten prager Tonkünstler-Gesellschaft, welche mit höchsten Hofdekrete vom 1sten März 1803 gnädigst bestätigt worden sind*, Prag 1810; Meliš, Emanuel Antonín: *O působení jednoty hudebních umelců Pražských k podporování vdov a sirotků* [On the activities of Prague's Society of Musicians], in: *Dalibor. Časopis pro hudbu, divadlo a umění vůbec* 6 (1853), no. 11, p. 81-82; Josef Proksch, *biographisches Denkmal aus dessen Nachlaßpapieren*, Reichenberg, Prag 1874; Branberger, Jan: *Das Konservatorium in Prag (1811–1911)*, Praha 1911; Poštolka, Milan: *Libreta strahovské hudební sbírky* [Librettos in the Strahov Music Collection], in: *Miscellanea Musicologica XXV–XXVI*, Praha 1975; Ludvová, Jitka: *Německý hudební život v Praze 1880–1939* [German Music Life in Prague 1880–1939], in: *Uměnovědné studie IV*, Praha 1983, p. 51-183; *Z hudebního života v Praze ve 2. polovině 19. století* [From Prague's late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Music Life], vol. 1: 1842–1865, in: *Edice dokumentů z fondu Státního ústředního archivu v Praze* 13, Praha 1984; Freemanová-Kopecká, Michaela: *Zur Händel-Rezeption in der Böhmischen Ländern in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, in: *Händel-Jahrbuch* 35, Halle a.d.S. 1989, p. 119-133; id.: *Prague's Society of Musicians (1803–1903/1930) and its role in the music and social life of the city*, in: *Hudební věda XL*, 2003, no. 1, p. 3-28.

<sup>2</sup>For the history of the Cecilská hudební jednota v Ústí nad Orlicí cf. especially: Zábrodský, Josef: *Paměti Cecilské hudební jednoty v Ústí nad Orlicí, vydané na památku stoletého jejího trvání* [Memoir of the Cecilian Music Society in Ústí nad Orlicí, published to commemorate one hundred years of its existence], Ústí nad Orlicí 1905.

The development of music making in Ústí nad Orlicí followed the same pattern as in many other towns under the Bohemian Crown. In the 16<sup>th</sup>, or possibly already in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century a “literary brotherhood” (“societas literatorum”) was founded here, to care for the promotion of sacred music. Its members performed in the town church, at that time Protestant, together with the pupils and teachers of the local Latin school.

After the Thirty Years War, the church was forced to become Catholic. In 1747 the “litterati” became a “pious brotherhood”. Most of such organisations closed down between 1783–1786, during the Joseph II Church Reform. Surprisingly, the property of the Ústí nad Orlicí “litterati” was not confiscated. Between 1786 and 1795, they were hiding among the congregation, sitting on special seats allocated to them. Their 1588 hymn book was still in use in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (the last date registered there is 1822).

By the year 1800, sacred music in the Ústí nad Orlicí town church was again flourishing. To support its development, the local citizens decided to set up a Cecilian Music Society. From its beginnings, the Cecilian Music Society was able to perform not only vocal, but also instrumental music (partially banned from the churches by the Viennese Court Decree of April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1784, which allowed the use of music instruments only on Sundays; on work days, only the organ was allowed). The first town band was founded in Ústí nad Orlicí in 1507; regular instrumental playing during church services is recorded in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries; in the 1780s to the 1790s, local instrumentalists gathered in an independent Múzická společnost (Music Society). The foundation of the Cecilian Music Society took this development further, including the foundation of a separate “Turkish” band, using the instruments discarded by the Austrian army and presented to the Society by one of its members. Ústí citizens considered Society membership an honour; those who were unable to master an instrument, or sing in the choir, became supporting members. Apart from performing music in the church, there were other occasions when music skills could be demonstrated: moving the money chest to a new elder’s house in a cortege accompanied by music; town festivities, among them the installation of the

mayor; concerts; serenades played as a tribute to people of merit; music visits to other towns and, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, also other countries; and last but not least the annual Cecilian gathering.

Around the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, on the eve of St. Cecilia's day, schoolboys performed concerts of chamber music in citizens' houses. In later decades, the festivities of St. Cecilia's day were preceded on its eve by a banquet, during which new members gave their admittance music performance, accounts were submitted, and the evening concluded with a concert of chamber or orchestral and choral music (sometimes also by a humorous theatre performance, or poetry recitation). On the day itself, music was performed during a festive Mass in the morning, and at the following dinner; in the evening, there was an entertainment, to which the wives of the members were invited, and then dance. Another entertainment followed the final annual accounting on the next day.

For the first five decades of the existence of the Society, there are no records of its work; the pages of its Memorial Book, procured in 1803, were filled only from 1849. The repertoire performed is known from the Society music collection, today comprising of more than two and half thousand works – Mass ordinaries and propers, Christmas and Easter compositions, funeral music, Vespers, Salve Reginas, Regina coelis, Alma redemptoris, Te Deums, Litanies, and other sacred works, and also secular music. The Ústí scores cover the time span of the late 18<sup>th</sup> to the late 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The early repertoire is typical for the smaller places in the Bohemian Lands at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries: Bohemian and Austrian music, mainly by composers from Prague (Franz Xaver Brixl, Augustin Schenkirz, Wenzel Johann Tomaschek and Kajetan Vogl), and Vienna (Anton Diabelli, Joseph Eybler, Georg Lickl, Wenzel Pichl and Franz Tuma), a number of works by Joseph and Michael Haydn (Joseph Haydn's oratorio *Die vier Jahreszeiten*, translated into Czech, enjoyed great popularity in Ústí since it was first performed there in 1823; also popular were *Die sieben letzten Worte* and *Die Schöpfung*). Relatively few works are by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven; there is also some Italian music (Luigi Cherubini). For most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this pattern did not change; newly acquired music was again mainly by

composers from Prague (Robert Führer, Ignaz Nitsch, Johann Nepomuk Škroup and Wenzel Heinrich Veit) and Vienna (Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Leopold Jansa, Johann Wenzel Hugo Vorzischek and Ignaz von Seyfried), rarely from other countries (Charles Gounod). The main sources of music were bequests and donations. The Society had direct links with Prague, Brno/Brünn and Vienna, and much music came from there to Ústí as gifts, or to be copied. This can be shown by the types of paper found in the collection: most of the scores are written on local paper, procured from paper mills in North East Bohemia; a minority on paper produced in other parts of Bohemia (possibly also in Prague, which cannot as yet be firmly proved), and on Italian paper, used for music copying in Vienna. A number of these scores were in permanent use for more than one hundred years; they testify to the changes in music and sound taste. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century parts written for trombones were in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century re-written for “Maschintrompetten” and “Flügelhorns” (probably not only because there were no trombone players available, or because visiting members of an army band took part in the performance, but also because the valve instruments were preferred from the 1820s to the 1900s all over Central Europe)<sup>3</sup>.

One of the known Prague sources of music was Fortunatus Khunt (1827–1886), a native of Ústí nad Orlicí, himself a good violinist, cellist and singer. As the Prague Břevnov Benedictine monastery Abbot, he presented the Ústí church musicians with music and also lent them music to copy from his monastery, and also its filial, the Broumov (Braunau, North Bohemia) Benedictine monastery. He also cared for appointing the musically talented boys from Ústí to Břevnov monastery as choristers. Fortunatus Khunt was one of the Honorary Members of the Society; another was the Viennese violinist and composer Franz Xaver

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<sup>3</sup>For the types of paper used by the Cecilian Music Society and the late 19<sup>th</sup> century changes of the character of the collection cf. Freemanová, Michaela: *Dílo Josepha a Michaela Haydna v hudebním archivu Cecilské jednoty* [Works by Joseph and Michael Haydn in the Music Archive of the Cecilian Music Society], in: *200 let trvání Cecilské hudební jednoty v Ústí nad Orlicí, sborník příspěvků z konference “Měšťanská kultura a hudební tradice v Ústí nad Orlicí”*, Ústí nad Orlicí 2004, p. 41-50.

Pechatschek (1820– after 1847), a son of the Viennese music teacher and composer Franz Martin Pechatschek (1763–1816), a native of Ústí nad Orlicí. Also Franz Xaver Pechatschek supplied the Society with music. An opposite case was a collection of sacred and secular music, originating in Ústí nad Orlicí, taken to Austria by the tradesman Johann Khunt, who settled in Graz, and, in 1944, finally sold to the Musicological department of Karl-Franzens-Universität in Graz<sup>4</sup>.

The influence of the Cecilian Music Society in the music life of Ústí nad Orlicí was strong – the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the foundation of several new choirs and chamber music ensembles, and a growth in the number of concerts and other social events in which music played a major part. Important changes in the history of this steadily progressing music making, centered around the town church, were marked by the onset of the Cecilian movement, and the development of the independent Czech cultural life from 1860, when the issue of the so called “Emperor’s October Diploma Decree” brought relief from political and social oppressions, the growth of the strength of the Czech intelligentsia, the formation of new Czech organisations and societies and the creation of new Czech culture. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the Ústí nad Orlicí church performances and concerts, organised by the Cecilian Music Society, the Czech repertoire was dominant; a number of new works were procured from local musicians.

The Cecilian movement, which reached Bohemia in 1874, was accepted reluctantly at first, if not with hostility: instrumental music, which the purists wished to ban from churches, was one of the most important parts of the Cecilian Society’s sacred music performances; in the process of establishing the Cecilian movement performance rules, the Society almost closed down. In 1879, however, Ústí nad Orlicí became the first Bohemian town to organise the so called Cyrillic festivity (Cyril being the Bohemian sacred music magazine, strongly supporting the Cecilian movement). Finally, the members of the Society took to performing

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<sup>4</sup>For the Khunt music collection in Graz cf. Schubert, Ingrid: *Eine Musikaliensammlung aus dem Besitz der Familie Khunt aus Ústí nad Orlicí* (Wildenschwert) (to be published).

Gregorian chant and sacred music by Claudio Casciolini, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and Franz Xaver Witt, as well as by some of the important Bohemian Cecilianists – Josef Förster, František Zdeněk Skuherský (who was made an Honorary Member of the Society), and Josef Cyril Sychra (a native of Ústí nad Orlicí). It seems, nevertheless, that the Society's interest in this type of music was rather short lived: some of the older scores, considered too profane for church use, were deposited in the town museum – but the music, performed on St. Cecilia Days, remained for decades, just as before the reform: Ludwig van Beethoven, Anton Diabelli, Luigi Cherubini and Joseph Eybler; and from Bohemian composers, Antonín Dvořák, Wenzel Johann Tomaschek, and the locals – Alois Hnilička, Jaroslav Kocian, Petr Kocian, and Josef Cyril Sychra.

In Ústí nad Orlicí, the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was, as anywhere else in Bohemia, marked by the loss of interest in performing sacred music from those school teachers who joined the radically progressive political parties. By the end of World War I, and the foundation of the Czech Republic, another danger for the continuing existence of the Cecilian Music Society appeared: the Roman Catholic Church was seen as the supporter of the Habsburg rule, and a new Czechoslovak Hussite Church was created, as an opposition denomination; its rite was derived from the Catholic – but its music was modelled on the simplicity of medieval Hussite and contemporary folkloric songs. The interest in supporting the performance of Catholic sacred music further diminished; music was seen as a means of “luring” the people into the church. Since World War I, instrumental music was heard in the Ústí church only on important dates; some of the musicians had to be hired. The Sunday services were accompanied only by the organ; the annual Cecilian festivities were restricted to the eve of St. Cecilia Day and the mass on the day itself. The Cecilian Music Society became active again in the 1930s and 1940s, especially during World War II. The same trend was characteristic for the time of the Communist rule, when the Church and sacred music became weapons of resistance – despite the fact that the political pressures sometimes forced the Cecilian Music Society members to give up their posts of church organists or choirmasters. The period atheism reflected in the younger people's loss of inter-

est in the Church in general, and with it, also in the Cecilian Society – which they might have anyhow considered old fashioned: especially because up to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, it retained its early, now outdated, features – women, for example, were allowed to become Society members only from 1973. The Society's repertoire also became outdated, especially during the 1980s and 1990s, which brought the renewed trend of “a capella” church singing, or just with the organ, and interest in either early (Jacob Arcadelt, Johann Sebastian Bach, Hans Leo Hassler, Jacobus Handl Gallus, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, Pierre de la Rue, and Melchior Vulpus), or contemporary music (including works by Licinio Refice, Petr Eben, and also the so-called “rhythmical songs”)<sup>5</sup>.

Today, the Cecilian Music Society is split into two factions. The branch which is in power now, returned to the same stage of sacred music performance, which their late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century ancestors disliked, and, in the end, avoided. What this development means for the future of the Society, remains to be seen. Its music collection is currently inaccessible, due to the Society's present aim of making its proper catalogue. Another inaccessible part of the same collection is deposited in the State Regional Archives in Ústí nad Orlicí, recently closed for rebuilding; new materials concerning the Society were acquired by the Ústí nad Orlicí Museum. Although more than two hundred years old, the Cecilian Music Society remains a living organism, the development of which would be worth further investigation.

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<sup>5</sup>For the post World War I and II development of the Cecilian Music Society cf. Žáková, Jana: *Duchovní hudba na Ústeckoorlicku* [Sacred Music in the Ústí nad Orlicí Region], diploma work, Brno 2000.